OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE'S

PAMPHLET.

PRICE EIGHTEEN-PENCE.

1399

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RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE's

PAMPHLET,

ON THE SUBJECT OF THE

FRENCH REVOLUTION.

BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA ·

By BENJAMIN BOUSFIELD, ESQ.

If a man would regiſter all his opinions on politics, religion, learning, &c. beginning from his youth, and ſo go on to old age, what a bundle of inconſiſtencies and contradictions would appear at laſt!

SWIFT.

DUBLIN, PRINTED.

LONDON:

RE-PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, IN ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M DCC XCI.

G. Pamph. 2913 (12)

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following letter was written during the bad weather in the Chriſtmas Holidays. —It contains ſuggeſtions which aroſe on the moment of reading Mr. Burke's Pamphlet. It was not originally intended to be publiſhed, but by the perſuaſion of the particular friend to whom it is addreſſed, I venture to ſend it into the world.—I took up my pen in defence of the moſt glorious of all earthly poſſeſſions—*Liberty*. The motive then, I hope, will apologize for the imperfections of the performance. I truſt, it is needleſs to aſſure the public, that this letter did not originate in private pique; on the contrary, I have been long in the habit of admiring Mr. Burke's vaſt

abilities,

abilities, of extolling his political and private virtues. Were he my boſom friend, I ſhould feel indignation at ſeeing ſuch talents levelled againſt the riſing freedom of a great nation, long oppreſſed by the yoke of ſlavery. I ſhould feel indignation on hearing doctrines advanced inimical to the rights of the people, and ſubverſive of the fundamental principles of the Britiſh Conſtitution. I ſhould feel indignation, at hearing the character of one of the moſt virtuous and enlightened Philoſophers of the age, traduced and ridiculed: and I deem it the duty of every honeſt man to oppoſe ſuch doctrines and defend ſuch characters. Not being, nor wiſhing to be, connected with party, I regret being obliged to make ſome animadverſions on the oppoſition in England. If in the inveſtigation of facts and of political meaſures, I have ſaid any thing to wound the feelings of any Gentleman of this denomination, I beg they will attribute it only to their connection with Mr. Burke, as it was impoſſible to ſtate thoſe facts, and to

expoſe

expoſe the inconſiſtency of the man, without ſome alluſion to the meaſures of the party, with which he was united. I owe the preſent adminiſtration no particular favours: in my own perſon I have felt their oppoſition. I have always thought that Mr. Pitt was a good Miniſter for England, but a bad one for Ireland. If I have any prepoſſeſſions for either, they are in favour of the Portland party; becauſe they have done ſome good for this country, and are pledged to do more. I am alſo confident, that ſome of their friends in this kingdom are excellent hoſtages to the public, for the performance of their engagements. I mean no literary conteſt with Mr. Burke, as it would be that of a Pigmy attempting to wreſtle with a Giant; but I annex my name as I never was aſhamed to avow my ſentiments.

B. BOUSFIELD.

LAKELANDS,
January 21ſt. 1791.

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

RIGHT HON. EDMUND BURKE'S

PAMPHLET.

DEAR SIR,

AS you deſire my ſentiments relative to Mr. Burke's pamphlet on the Revolution in France, I ſhall give them to you as they occur: at the ſame time I muſt tell you that I feel the inequality of my abilities to ſuch a taſk, and as there is more in that performance to cenſure than to praiſe, I enter on it with reluctance. It is impoſſible to read it without perceiving the inconſiſtency of the author and the dangerous errors of the work. Mr. Burke may acquire by this ſplendid performance ſome addition of literary fame, but not ſufficient, in my opinion,

to compenſate the loſs of political reputation. It points out to us a melancholy truth, that neither genius, nor talents, nor learning, can at all times ſubdue the paſſions, or remove the prejudices, to which the wiſeſt are often expoſed; for, it is to be conceived that Mr. Burke's mind is too honourable and diſintereſted, ever to be influenced by ſordid or ſelfiſh motives.

In reading his pamphlet, we muſt admire the burſts of eloquence, the beautiful turns of language, and the elegant figures, which, in general, embelliſh and animate his pages: but the reaſoning, though very ingenious, is fallacious. It appears to be above all controul of common ſenſe, at leaſt, the greateſt part of it, and to be little more than the ſoaring flights of a boundleſs imagination, and the effuſions of an irritable and irritated mind. What friend to the conſtitution can reliſh his political dogmas? his panegyrick, his ſatire, and his ridicule, are immoderate, unmerited, and inapplicable. The analogies between the conſtitutions, the churches, and the relative political ſituations of Great-Britain and France, rarely attach. The information with regard to France is unauthenticated and erroneous; the deſcriptions, exaggerated beyond all reality.

In the firſt part of Mr. Burke's pamphlet he exclaims, "Am I to felicitate a madman, who

"has

" has eſcaped from the *protecting reſtraint and* " *wholeſome darkneſs* of his cell, on the reſtoration " to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am " I to congratulate a highwayman or a murderer " who has broken priſon, upon the recovery of " his natural rights?"* —Gracious heaven! Do we live to hear the eloquent declaimer in favour of the rights of humanity, and the freedom of the ſubject, become the avowed advocate of cruelty and deſpotiſm? Do we live to hear him declare, that the ſlavery of the old government of France, was *protecting reſtraint?* or, that the ſubterraneous gloom of the dungeons of the Baſtile, was *wholeſome darkneſs?* Do we live to hear him aſſert, that exemption from arbitrary impriſonment of both body and mind, could be too dearly purchaſed or too ſtrongly contended for? Is it becauſe the citizens, who aſſailed the Baſtile, that infernal fortreſs, cut off the head of the horrible executioner of tyrannic vengeance, the treacherous De Launi, that Mr. Burke brands the people of France with the infamous appellation of highwaymen and murderers? This is to deny all the political opinions of his life—at once to ſurrender all the refined and generous ſentiments of his ſoul. Mr. Burke proceeds with ſevere animadverſions on two clubs in London;

* Burke, page 8.

and,

and, though he affects to deſpiſe, he certainly labours to render them of importance, by the number of pages he beſtows in the conſideration of them, and the alarm he ſounds, as to the tendency of their reſolutions.

The freedom of thought and the freedom of communicating and publiſhing that thought, where the law does not declare it to be injurious, has ever been eſteemed the birth-right of Engliſhmen, and, I truſt, will never be diſputed. To that we are, in a great meaſure, indebted for the preſervation of our Conſtitution: it is through the medium of a free preſs, the rights of the people are promulged and maintained. It was that glorious privilege, which reſcued the land from ſlavery and arbitrary power.—It is that cenſorial tribunal, which reſtrains the exceſs of ambition, renders all miniſters reſponſible, and makes even tyrants tremble.—Where then lies the ſuppoſed criminality of theſe clubs? Did they attempt what they had not a right to do? or, having a right, where was the injury done to ſociety in the exerciſe of it?—where the mighty cauſe that could provoke the gigantic abilities of Mr. Burke, to ſtride over theſe *inſignificant clubs?* Why ſhould they receive the chaſtiſement of this mighty orator, for conveying their ſentiments on the revolution in France?—An event, which attracts the attention of the world, and on which

Mr.

Mr. Burke indulges his unbounded ſpeculations.—For my part, I think their reſolutions do honour to their authors, tend to liberalize the public mind, and may be ſerviceable to the community. The ſentiments they expreſſed, and the obſervations they conveyed, were directed to unite in peace, in amity, and in freedom, two powerful nations, who, through the prejudices and errors of revolving ages, were accuſtomed to regard each other as natural enemies, (horrible appellation!)—whoſe mutual object was ravage, conqueſt and depreſſion.

The National Aſſembly received, with reſpectful attention, the addreſs of the Revolution Society, becauſe it conveyed the approbation of freemen, declared a congeniality of ſentiment, and expreſſed a reverberation of their own doctrines. That great and liberal aſſembly do not look down, with faſtidious diſdain, on the people; they do not forget the hands which raiſed them to that eminence. Their pride and their glory is to ſpread the dominion of liberty over the habitable globe, and they regard all men engaged in that cauſe as friends, allies and aſſociates. They claim no ſuperiority but the ſuperiority of ſentiment. How different the opinions of Mr. Burke! He inſinuates, that a few ſtateſmen alone, ſhould declare, direct, and even reſtrain public opinion. If that excluſive privilege ſhould

once

once be admitted, a government ſimilar to the old one in France, to which Mr. Burke is ſo much attached, would ſoon be eſtabliſhed in England. I am but little acquainted with the gentlemen who compoſe theſe clubs, nor is it material to enquire minutely concerning them; but it may be preſumed, that there are many reſpectable characters among them, at leaſt fully as reſpectable as among thoſe political meetings in Weſtminſter, of which Mr. Burke is a member, who frequently venture to publiſh their opinions on public tranſactions. If rank, wealth or ſtation were alone to give weight or ſanction to opinions, how little would the world be profited by the labours of the wiſe, the ingenious, the virtuous, and the learned? What would have become of the *political tracts, the declamations* in favour of *American freedom, in which the rights of men were ſo ably ſupported?—The mighty torrents of eloquence againſt the plunder of the eaſt?* How is Mr. Burke more entitled to public attention than theſe reſpectable ſocieties? If he is, it can only be attributed to his ſuperior talents, and his ſuppoſed virtues.—With ineffable contempt, Mr. Burke talks of the literary tracts and publications of theſe clubs. His political confederates, Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, differ from him on this ſubject; they were members of the Conſtitutional Society. It is to be ſuppoſed they did not take an inactive part in framing or circulating

culating the publications of that club. Their motives I ſhall not attempt to conjecture, but the object was apparently laudable.—It was to explain, in an eaſy and familiar ſtile, the inherent rights of the ſubject, to mark the particular duties of a juryman, to point out the defects ariſing from corruption and decay in the repreſentation, and to ſubmit to public conſideration various plans of reform.—It is to that club, that we are indebted for bringing forth the unparalleled legal abilities of Mr. Erſkine, ſo eminently diſplayed in the trial of the Dean of St. Aſaph, of which they ſupported the expence. By that trial, and the late deciſion in the caſe of Stockdale, the ineſtimable right of juries, to judge of both law and fact in matter of libels, was vindicated and aſcertained. Thus happily were overthrown the doctrines of Lord Mansfield, that tended to eſtabliſh a ſpecies of perſecution, which the friends of *divine and indefeaſible right*, which all corrupt, arbitrary and arrogant politicians have ever favoured, in order to ſtifle the voice of truth, to repreſs public enquiry, and to reſtrain public animadverſion. To particulariſe individuals of that ſociety who are living, might appear as adulation; but with ſafety and with truth we may mention the name of the late Doctor John Jebb—he was an original member of that club which Mr. Burke ridicules and deſpiſes. The very

very name of Jebb ſhould ſhield them from detraction. He was the moſt diſintereſted patriot, the moſt benevolent philoſopher, and the moſt conſcientious theologian: whoſe labours, and whoſe learning were dedicated to the ſervice, the freedom, and the happineſs of mankind. His benevolent diſpoſition was bounded neither by ſpace nor time; it felt for the miſeries of mankind, exulted and triumphed in alleviating them. This eminent character, though not elevated by rank or wealth, was courted by the great, beloved by the humble, and envied by the ambitious. He ſupported the party with which Mr. Burke was connected, ſo long as he deemed them friends to the *rights of men*. He ſupported them during the American war: but at the moment in which the coalition with Lord North was formed, he diſclaimed the party, reprobated and oppoſed them.

Having indulged his ſportive fancy in ſupercilious invective and arrogant contempt, Mr. Burke proceeds to attack a very reſpectable body in the community—the Diſſenters. Surely his liberal mind cannot retain reſentment for the part they took at the Briſtol Election. But, be this as it may, conduct is the true teſt of character. Their attachment to the Conſtitution, and their loyalty to the Sovereign, have remained unſhaken on the moſt trying and eventful occaſions:

occaſions.—Not ſharing in the favours of the Crown, their affection for their King is genuine and unpurchaſed—not the venal tribute of courtly adulation, nor the poiſonous incenſe of diſappointed ambition. Their loyalty is deeply rooted in the Conſtitution. It is not of that pliant nature which bends at every guſt of party; nothing can ſhake it but the ſtorm which wrecks the ſtate.

To depreciate and calumniate is no difficult taſk, for one ſo long engaged in political combat as Mr. Burke has been; and though we muſt admire the adroitneſs with which he handles his poiſoned weapons, yet we muſt condemn his judgment, in directing them againſt an object they cannot penetrate; and, not penetrating, they muſt recoil with double force on his own boſom. Doctor Price is the ſelected object on whom to wreak his vengeance, to gratify his ridicule and to diſplay his wit:—a venerable Sage, whoſe offence is his philanthropy, whoſe crime is his love of liberty. Haſtening to the verge of life,—if he ſtopped in his career, to behold the vaſt effuſion of light, which ſuddenly burſt on and illuminated the political hemiſphere, if he viewed it with admiration, and expreſſed his joy in tranſports of zeal, ought he to be held up to public deteſtation, or pointed out as a criminal, whoſe life ſhould be forfeited? Was it, be-

cauſe he rejoiced that the people of France had broken from the dungeons of ſlavery? Was it, becauſe he exulted at hearing that the King of the French on the 14th of July (not on the 6th of October) had accompanied his ſubjects to the Altar, to return thanks for the bleſſings ſo recently received, to ſwear eternal fealty to their regenerated Conſtitution, and to triumph in declaring himſelf the Father, and not the Tyrant of his People?

I diſlike the introduction of politics into the Pulpit, and allow its impropriety; but can any one deny, that it has been long practiſed, and is to this moment continued in our Church? The hiſtory of ſermons delivered on the 30th of January will ſupply ample evidence of this fact. It is really ſomething new to hear from the Pulpit, the rights of the People aſſerted; and the prerogatives of Kings inſiſted on as a truſt from the People. This is the *novelty* which ſo much offends Mr. Burke. The Old Jewry preacher invaded the rights of the preacher of St. Stephen's. It was his excluſive privilege to define the rights of the Crown, and to ſay "its power had in-"creaſed, was increaſing, and ought to be di-"miniſhed." It was his peculiar province to deſcend into the very kitchen of majeſty, to farm out the royal table, and to prove to their Majeſties by *wholeſome* regulations, that their *daily*

food

food depended on *the will of the people.* To one not acquainted with Mr. Burke's political life, his violent invective againſt Dr. Price would appear to be the effect not only of great public crimes, but of ſome moral turpitude of character; and ſuch a perſon would be ready to imagine, that it would be equally impoſſible for Mr. Burke to pardon the delinquency, and to be reconciled to the delinquent. But to thoſe who will trouble themſelves to take a retroſpective view of this Gentleman's public conduct, it will not ſeem extraordinary, if he were to be diſcovered at a future period, perhaps not far diſtant, pardoning the offence, courting the friendſhip, and even extolling the virtues of the Old Jewry Preacher. Do we not remember, how his abuſe and his defamation were levelled againſt *Lord Guilford?* how often has he told the people, that this Miniſter ought to be brought to the ſcaffold for his corrupt practices, his phrenzy, and his infamy in office?—Yet in a little time after the public and repeated avowal of theſe ſentiments, he received that *corrupt* Miniſter into his boſom, coaleſced with him in party, formed one of his adminiſtration; and from that magical period, he has continued to be as laviſh in encomiums, as he was prodigal in abuſe of the defaulter of *unaccounted millions.* We need not this trait of Mr. Burke's character to convince us, that he poſſeſſes the chriſtian virtues of charity

rity and forgiveneſs. From this circumſtance, the friends of Doctor Price may form the flattering hope, that the edge of Mr. Burke's reſentment may one day be blunted, that his invective may ſubſide, and that he may ceaſe to call out for the fate of Hugh Peters to alight on their Reverend Friend.

Mr. Burke, with great indignation, points at that part of Doctor Price's Sermon, wherein he aſſerts, that his preſent Majeſty is almoſt the only lawful King in the world, becauſe the only one who owes his Crown to the choice of the people; and from theſe premiſes, he very uncandidly labours to prove that Doctor Price meant to infer, that the Crown was perpetually elective:—an inference which the words do not warrant, nor can it be juſtly ſuppoſed were ever intended to convey. They are, in my opinion, perfectly conſtitutional, they are reſpectful to the people, and the ſtrongeſt aſſertion of his Majeſty's juſt title to the throne. It certainly would be equally abſurd to inſiſt, that the Crown was perpetually elective, as to maintain that it was perpetually hereditary. It ſhould be remembered, that all power originates with the people, that it is delegated, but never alienated; that when power is abuſed, the people have a right to reſume it. This is the key-ſtone which binds and ſupports our conſtitution. This doctrine is

engraven

engraven on the human heart by the hand of Omnipotence. It is paramount to all conventional ſociety, coeval and co-exiſtent with our government. This is among *the rights of men*, which Mr. Burke attempts to ridicule; but I cannot either reliſh his wit or partake of his merriment on this ſubject. In the formation of our conſtitution—amidſt the various ſtruggles of the people, theſe old *faſhioned rights of men* were ſteadily regarded. On them the liberty of the Britiſh empire is founded. To the ſpirit that aſſerted and maintained them we are indebted for the various improvements of our conſtitution; and to the prevalence of this ſpirit it has been owing, that, while other governments were mouldering into decay, or ſinking into deplorable tyranny, ours was riſing to perfection, renovating thoſe rights, and recurring to thoſe unalienable poſſeſſions.

The interference of the people, by themſelves or by their repreſentatives, in the direction of the ſucceſſion to the Crown, has been frequently exemplified in the annals of the Britiſh hiſtory. Parliament aſſerted, and exerciſed its right of altering and limiting the ſucceſſion to the Crown, in the reigns of Henry the 4th, Henry the 7th, Henry the 8th, Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth, William and Mary, and Queen Anne. Blackſtone

ſays

ſays,* "That the three latter did not take the Crown by *hereditary right or deſcent*, but by way of *donation* or *purchaſe*, as the lawyers call it; by which they mean any method of acquiring an eſtate otherwiſe than by deſcent." Mr. Burke in the conſideration of this ſubject, by which he labours to diſprove that his Majeſty and the houſe of Hanover owe their crown to the choice of the people, is ingenious, ſubtile, various, and metaphyſical. He endeavours to conduct his reader through a labyrinth of deductions and a maze of intricacies. He bewilders the underſtanding, and perplexes attention: But, through the brilliant tranſparency of his caſuiſtry, we ſee the exploded doctrine of *indefeaſible hereditary right*, ſtarting from the canvas, not in the ſimple garb of Sir John Filmer, but in the courtly and ſplendid dreſs of modern hypocriſy. It is true, that the Britiſh conſtitution, in its movements and operations, is complicated and multifarious; but in its conſtruction ſimple and unencumbered. It reſts upon one Pivot—*the rights of men.* On that axis it performs all its revolutions, and points to one common centre—*the choice of the people.* While it continues in this orbit, like the ſun, it animates and vivifies all who live under its influence. It cannot be moved from its ſtation in the political hemiſphere, but by ſome mighty con-

* Commentaries, &c. vol. 1. p. 215. ed. 9. 8vo.

vulſion

vulſion which, I truſt, is far diſtant; tho' this I will venture to ſay, that nothing can more powerfully contribute to that convulſion, than a revival and diſſemination of the *doctrine of indefeaſible hereditary right*. It is true Mr. Burke makes a diſtinction, but the ſhades are ſo finely blended that a common eye can ſcarcely diſtinguiſh them. To the revolution of 1688 he particularly alludes; aſcertains his premiſes, and draws his concluſions from that period. The friends of the rights of the people are equally pleaſed to meet him on that ground. They will not exclude themſelves from the advantage of recurrence to original conſtitutional rights, and more remote precedents; for it muſt be granted by all ſenſible and unprejudiced men, that there are ſome great firſt principles from whence all religious and political inſtitutions are deduced. The goſpel is the foundation of the former. *The rights of men*, of the latter. The more true the ſyſtem of religion, the more firmly it adheres to thoſe ſacred writings. The more free and mild the government, the more ſenſibly and powerfully are the rights of men recognized.—In every material deviation from the goſpel, religion becomes more corrupt and impure. In every material departure from the rights of men, the ſubject is aggrieved, the truſt violated, and government aſſumes an arbitrary and deſpotic ſway. In no period of the Britiſh hiſtory were theſe doctrines

better

better proved than at the Revolution of 1688.—It was an event in which every friend of the conſtitution muſt rejoice. Much was maintained for the people, though much was omitted. It was a tranſaction of great policy and temperate wiſdom. However, it appeared to have been more directed as a ſalutary and lenient medicine to remedy the diſorders of the day, than to act as a powerful antidote againſt the growing evils of futurity. The utmoſt caution accompanied all the proceedings of that time. England, ſince the reign of Elizabeth to that period, had experienced the greateſt viciſſitudes in her government. She had felt all the ill conſequences ariſing from arbitrary power and deſperate remedies. Anarchy, confuſion, licentiouſneſs, uſurpation, paſſive ſubmiſſion, violent aſſertion of right, vicious courts, popular deſpondence and popular rage alternately ſhook her frame. The reign of James the IId evidently ſhewed that a weak prince in the hands of corrupt courtiers and a bigotted clergy is the moſt dangerous of monarchs. An open attack was made on all that is dear to Engliſhmen—their religion and liberties.—It was a great epocha—future freedom and ſlavery hung in equilibrium. The nation was certainly indignant. Unfortunately the public mind was not unanimous. Party ran high; there ſtill remained many advocates for the *indefeaſible divine right of kings* and the *paſſive obedience of ſubjects*. Happily the advocates for the

the *rights of men* preponderated. The idea, that the power even of kings was a delegation from the people, and if abuſed, ought to be reaſſumed, became prevalent, and was ſoon brought into action. The Tories were diſguſted and intimidated by the wavering and puſillanimous conduct of James. They felt ſeverely the evils of his adminiſtration. They felt the diſadvantages of a weak government. They perceived that their liberties were precarious, and their properties inſecure. In this moment of public agitation the Prince of Orange arrived. This event gave ſtrength and vigor to the hopes of the Whigs; deſpondence and deſpair to the Tories: however the latter were ſtill formidable. The auſtere, the myſterious, yet decided deportment of the Prince forcibly ſtruck both parties. They ſaw that the moment was of the utmoſt importance. Unleſs they ſeized the opportunity which then offered to ſettle the government, the kingdom would probably be expoſed to all the miſeries of anarchy and civil war. Both parties ſoon agreed as to the main point, and the revolution was effected without confuſion, without bloodſhed, by a wonderful coaleſcence of oppoſite intereſts. However, prudence dictated that ſome reſpect ſhould be paid to the particular opinions of each party. The Whigs having prevailed, wiſely declined touching on the point of hereditary right. Lord Somers, and other leading characters among

prudently abſtained from wounding the feelings of the Tories, by any declaratory act on this delicate ſubject. They perceived, that it might have hazarded the unanimity of the country, and thereby have deſtroyed the great work in the moment of completion. By declaring ſimply that the throne was vacant, they eſtabliſhed the right of the people to * "caſhier their kings for miſconduct." Having caſhiered James IId, and called the Prince of Orange to fill the vacancy, they indiſputably aſcertained their *right of choice.* By the very act of ſettling the Crown on William and Mary, *they embodied their principle.* It ſubſtantiated the right of the people, more than all the declaratory acts which could have been enacted. Here was an actual exerciſe of the right, an indiſputable proof of its exiſtence. It is to be obſerved, that when Mr. Hampden in the Lower Houſe put the queſtion for converting the convention into a parliament, which queſtion was carried, that it ran thus, "whether a King *elected* by the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons Aſſembled, &c. The words, "*a King elected,*" evidently ſhew the ſenſe of the nation on that tranſaction. Our elegant and ingenious hiſtorian Mr. Hume, who cannot be ſuſpected of much partiality towards the Whig intereſt, and whoſe general political

* See Dr. Price's Sermon.

opinions

opinions ſeem *now* ſo congenial to thoſe of Mr. Burke, ſpeaking on the conſequences of the Revolution in 1688 expreſſes himſelf to this effect, "a maxim that had been conſidered only as a theory of political writers was now realiſed, and it was declared by both houſes of parliament that *there was an original contract between king and people.*" Thus the favourite ſyſtem of *divine hereditary right and paſſive obedience*, ſo long aſſerted and ſupported, appears to be entirely broken down by the principles of the revolution, which maintain that the right to the throne was neither divine nor hereditary, but was derived ſolely from *the choice of the people*, to be enjoyed with ſuch conditions and limitations as they might enact.

To what other title than the choice of the people could King William be indebted for the Crown? If he founded his pretenſions on hereditary right, he was an uſurper: On that ground, the immediate, unoffending male heir of James was alone entitled to it. But, (as Mr. Burke ſays,) the Crown was ſettled on King William by act of parliament. It is to be remarked, that parliament muſt ever keep within the bounds of the conſtitution: it is not omnipotent. If therefore the conſtitution implied that the Crown ſhould invariably deſcend in the direct hereditary male line, and that the people were on no occaſion

caſion to have any choice in directing the ſucceſſion, the very act of ſettlement was a *Felo de ſe*, an unwarrantable aſſumption of power, could only be binding on thoſe who made it, and could not be obligatory on poſterity. This would be one of the evil conſequences of aſſerting, that the Crown was perpetually hereditary. The title of the preſent Royal Family is exactly ſimilar to that of King William. It reſts upon the ſame baſis—*the choice of the people.* If William the IIId owed his Crown to the choice of the people, George the IIId holds it by the ſame title; it was ſettled at the ſame period, and founded on the ſame principle. Blackſtone, (whom Mr. Burke quotes) ſays,* "that the declaration of the convention in 1688 was agreeable to the *ſpirit of the conſtitution*, and to the *rights of human nature.*" Again he ſays, † "ſhould the throne be vacant, the right of diſpoſing of this vacancy ſeems naturally to recur to the Lords and Commons, *the truſtees and repreſentatives of the people.* And when he mentions the ſtatute of William and Mary, 12 and 13 William III. c. 2, ſettling the Crown on the Houſe of Hanover, he remarks, that ‡ theſe limitations clearly prove the power of parliament to *alter the ſucceſſion*, and by the ſtatute of the 6th of Queen Anne, 6 Anne c. 7. any perſon who ſhall diſpute it, is guilty of high

* Commentaries, vol. I. p. 213. edit. 7. 8vo.

† Page 214. ‡ Page 217

treaſon,

treaſon.—If it be neceſſary to puſh this matter farther, let us ſuppoſe a caſe, which I truſt will never happen, that the Houſe of Hanover be extinct, to whom would the Crown revert? Surely to the people: the laſt King in remainder could not diſpoſe of it by will. Parliament would certainly conſider of a ſucceſſor, and confer it on whom their wiſdom ſhould think fit. When I talk of Parliament, I conſider them as the organs of the people.—From the inherent rights of men—from the immutable ſpirit of the conſtitution,—from the various precedents of former ages,—from the tranſactions at the revolution,—from the beſt legal authorities,—from the opinions of the moſt enlightened ſtateſmen of this day, as well as of paſt times, we may with Doctor Price glory in declaring that his preſent Majeſty is a lawful ſovereign, owing his Crown to the *choice of the people*, and whoever attempts to contradict this juſt title, commits treaſon againſt the conſtitution,

In Mr. Burke's beautiful apoſtrophe to the Queen of France, every one admires the talents of the writer, though there are many who think the application is unmerited.—Various are the opinions on this ſubject. Some ſuppoſe, while he is celebrating that *great lady* as the moſt * *amiable*, the moſt dignified, and moſt virtuous of her

* Burke, page 111.

ſex,

ſex, he is only indulging his ſportive fancy in that rich vein of irony and humour, in which he peculiarly excels; while others conceive, that in purſuing the ſublimity of the poet, he hazards the veracity of the hiſtorian, and the dignity of the ſtateſman.—To many it appears not as a tragi-comedy, which Mr. Burke facetiouſly calls the revolution in France, but as a mock-heroic, wherein he makes a magnanimous effort to recall the wandering ſpirit of chivalry, and by a ſublime exertion to rekindle "the † *glory of the world.*"—To me it appears not as a picture too highly coloured, but as a tribute juſtly due to her merits, and as a great trait of the author's exquiſite ſenſibility. On the whole I agree with him, yet in ſome parts of the deſcription, I differ with becoming humility. It is of no material conſequence, except to round the period, how many years have elapſed ſince I ſaw the Queen of France; but when I had that honour and that happineſs, ſhe did not appear to me any thing "like a ‡ viſion;" ſhe ſeemed to be formed as much of corporeal matter as any of her ſex, finely moulded and harmoniouſly blended.—She was not a phantom mocking the embrace.—Wherever ſhe moved, wherever ſhe looked, whomever ſhe touched, ſhe certainly animated and enchanted. To my eyes ſhe did not "ſeem § ſcarcely to

† Burke, page 113. ‡ Ibid. 112. § Ibid.

touch

touch this orb." On the contrary, ſhe appeared to cling to the world, and the world to her. "To her title to veneration ſhe added enthuſiaſtic, not diſtant love." She was not then obliged to carry the * ſharp antidote againſt diſgrace. At that time, in the various conflicts of her life, it was not to the point of the dagger ſhe applied for conſolation and relief. There was no † dreaming in thoſe days, all was reality; her happy ſlumbers were not diſturbed by § "a band of ruffians and aſſaſſins reeking with blood;" then, all was huſhed, her virtues were truly "amiable." Gracious with her equals, familiar with her inferiors. —Her attachments were of the cloſeſt and ſtrongeſt nature: generous and unſuſpicious, eaſy of acceſs, and not knowing how to refuſe,—ſhe dealt out her royal favours with profuſe liberality.—Never did any Queen of France with more munificence compenſate good ſervices, or reward great actions.—The Livre Rouge abundantly teſtifies her liberality. Mr. Burke juſtly celebrates her piety and courage; and tells us, that ſhe has reconciled ſuicide to her *patient mind*.—However, this part of the panegyric comes not ſo well from the avowed and zealous advocate of chriſtianity. —When he was writing it, we muſt conceive him to be ſo enraptured with the goddeſs, as that for the moment he forgot his God, and loſt ſight

* Burke, page 112. † Ibid. 122. § Ibid. 105.

of

of that religion he ſo much reveres and ſo ably ſupports, which teaches patience under misfortunes, and reſignation in the moſt rending afflictions.—Mr. Burke, perhaps, adopts this as a good mode of combining pagan worſhip and pagan heroiſm with chriſtian piety.—It is only "‡ varying the means to obtain the end."—And now, ye celebrated knights of chivalry, for ſome, I truſt, there are remaining, hear Mr. Burke's ſpirit-ſtirring ſummons,—aſſemble—let your weapons leap from their ſcabbards, brandiſh them high in air—ſwear by *the viſion* of your miſtreſſes to avenge the cauſe of this "great lady" to do her juſtice or periſh in the attempt,—on this depends the † *glory of the world.*—In this mock-heroic of Mr. Burke, he takes every poetic licence;—matters of fact are beneath the dignity of meaſured proſe. We are happy in announcing, that the centinel who was at the door of the Queen's apartment, when attacked by the mob from Paris, is not dead but liveth.

Without the aid of chivalry, common ſenſe and common feeling muſt produce ſentiments of compaſſion and abhorrence, at the ſcene which was acted at Verſailles on the 6th of October, the day alluded to by Mr. Burke. It exhibited an awful leſſon on the inſtability of all human great-

‡ Burke, page 356. † Ibid. 113.

neſs,—

neſs.—Nothing is ſo tremendous as an enraged mob, endeavouring to redreſs their own wrongs. In England the miſchief has been frequently felt; at no other period more than at the time of Lord George Gordon's mob; the object of which, however, was not to redreſs wrongs, but to commit injuries—it took its riſe from barbarous bigotry and intolerant perſecution—it proceeded from the * "hot ſpirit drawn out of the Alembic" of church and ſtate—it laid waſte and conſumed private property, and at laſt the attack was directed againſt the treaſure of the country.—The exceſſes of the mob at Verſailles were relatively trivial compared to thoſe. Though we cannot approve of the means, yet we ſee more policy and wiſdom in the meaſure of the Paris mob, than generally actuate ſuch an aſſembly.—The object was to bring the Royal Family to Paris, where they could remain in perſonal and national ſafety; for it was known, that the ariſtocrats purpoſed to take them off, with a large army and their King at their head, to make an effort to reſtore the old deſpotic government, and conſequently to drench their country with civic blood. The chief perſon who harangued the mob for the purpoſe of removing their Majeſties to Paris, was, as I am well aſſured, a nobleman, who had himſelf ſeverely felt the tyrannic oppreſſion of the

* Burke, page 135.

old government. In an addreſs preſented to the King, he ſtates, that one of his miniſters had violently ſeized on his wife, kept her as his miſtreſs, threw him into priſon, and compelled him to make over half his property to her, as the indiſpenſible conſideration of his reſtoration to liberty. This ſingle act of deſpotiſm might alone ſeem ſufficient to arouſe a ſpirit of reſiſtance in the people. On every account, I confeſs, that I am one of thoſe who look upon the revolution in France, as one of the grandeſt events which have happened in any age or in any country—it may be railed at by the prejudiced, or decried by the illiberal—but when the prejudices of the day ſhall ſubſide, and when real information can be obtained of its operations and effects, it probably will be the admiration of all nations, which perhaps one after another will become its humble imitators.

Notwithſtanding Mr. Burke's pathetic tale, deſcriptive of the exceſſes and enormities committed by the mobs of France, among whom he very decently includes the National Aſſembly, it would poſe his ingenuity, and we may challenge his hiſtorical reſearch to produce any one inſtance in either antient or modern annals, where a revolution, of any nearly equal magnitude, was effected with leſs enormity or leſs blood-ſhed. The unhappy objects of popular rage and popular ſacrifice

were

were few, comparatively ſpeaking—they were ſelected as the moſt infamous delinquents—theſe unfortunate men were the willing inſtruments of horrible deſpotiſm, and their lives, I was almoſt going to ſay, were juſtly forfeited for their crimes. We have ſeen a generous, though exceſſive and miſtaken zeal actuating the Paris mobs. Their object was not to plunder or to deſpoil, or to enrich themſelves. Their fury was directed againſt the plunderers of the ſtate, and the ſuppoſed oppreſſors of the people: and though we muſt ſhed a tear for the ſufferings of certain individuals, and lament the outrage committed againſt humanity; yet in reflecting on ſuch ſcenes, we muſt find ſome conſolation in the hope, that good may be derived from evil, and that the melancholy tranſactions to which we allude, will make an lawful impreſſion on all thoſe in whom public confidence is repoſed, how they venture to violate their truſt, or to invade the rights of the people.

We cannot doubt Mr. Burke's feelings—even at the recital of fictitious woe, they are exquiſitely refined.—In powers of amplification:—In pathetic deſcription he is unrivalled. However, ſuch is the variety of the human heart, that objects nearly ſimilar, at different times, impreſs different ſentiments, and produce different effects. Fancied evils often give more pain than real.—

We ſee the ſame man exulting in the tears he has ſhed over imaginary diſtreſs, we ſee him turn his ſympathy to ſomething more real. But in order to give theſe finer feelings the fulleſt ſcope and indulgence, we ſee him painting the object of compaſſion and repreſenting the object of misfortune far beyond reality—we ſee him weeping over the degradation of tyranny, and hear him rending the air with lamentations for the abaſement of deſpotiſm.—It is true, the King of France has experienced indignities—that he is a ſuffering monarch—but, he is ſuffering for his follies, and the vices of his adminiſtration. Our tears are not his due—however we muſt contemplate with reverential fear the viciſſitudes of fortune. We muſt lament the depravity of human nature; but we ſhould rejoice, that even in this world there exiſts a corrective power:—while we make theſe moral reflections on this momentous event, we ſhould not fail to draw the political concluſion, that all power proceeds from the people, is never alienated, and when abuſed, may be reſumed.

In England there lately happened a ſcene of real diſtreſs, which harrowed up the feelings of the moſt obdurate—excited the compaſſion of Europe, and called forth the ſenſibility of the moſt diſtant regions. We ſaw the Father, not the tyrant of his people—viſited by the ſevereſt

malady

malady with which human nature could be afflicted—we ſaw the Monarch of the mightieſt empire of freedom enchained on the bed of ſickneſs—we ſaw all the noble faculties of man—all that give him pre-eminence over other created beings—and make him hope for immortality—all extinguiſhed in a moment, levelled to the duſt, and the poor worm who crawls in it was a giant in intellect to this once imperial ſovereign. What increaſed the general diſtreſs on this melancholy event, was an univerſal ſenſe of the virtues of the afflicted object, for he was a juſt, a mild and pious King. Over the bed of ſickneſs and deſpair inceſſantly hung the former partner of his ſoul, and the ſolace of his life, whoſe domeſtic virtues and whoſe mental accompliſhments uſed to pour the balm of comfort into the royal breaſt, when agitated by public care. But hopeleſs and ineffectual for a time were all theſe endearing blandiſhments, all theſe engaging attentions, which on any other occaſion would ſmooth the aſperities of life, ſoften the rigor of adverſity, and give comfort to the bed of ſickneſs. In this moment of univerſal concern, what were Mr. Burke's feelings? Where was the ſenſibility which even weeps over the tale of imaginary woe? Where lay deeply concealed that commiſeration which ſo largely and ſo recently was beſtowed on diſtant objects of diſtreſs? Where was that compaſſion which is now profuſely extended to their

Majeſties

Majeſties of France? and why? Becauſe they were marched in ſolemn ſtep and ſlow from their palace of Verſailles to the antient and magnificent ſeat of their royal anceſtors in Paris, attended, not by mercenary troops, but by the life-guards of liberty—the people. Did this ſympathy require ſo long a time to ſublimate in the political retort, and at laſt to burſt like a bubble, on the world? It is not for me to attempt to ſearch into the receſſes of the heart, but, perhaps, the people of England having ſo lately experienced Mr. Burke's deſcriptive talents on a leſs intereſting ſubject, may await with anxiety his tale on that, for which their feelings were ſo juſtly awakened. However, if we may judge from appearances, and an attention to his conduct on that awful incident, his feelings were expreſſed more by exultation than by grief.—His tauntings—his ſevere animadverſions—the tedious and torturing examination of Dr. Willis—offered more cruel indignity to Majeſty than was ſhewn in all "the Thracian Orgies" acted at Verſailles. What pointed ſarcaſms, what piercing inſults were not directed againſt the beſt and moſt exalted Matron in Great Britain? Who but remembers, how Mr. Burke tortured and racked the ſenſes, in a vain endeavour to prove from medical information, that it was impoſſible his Majeſty could recover from his malady? Who but remembers, how he and his friends endeavoured to preclude

his

his Majeſty from the poſſibility of reaſſuming his Throne?—Their ſympathy and benevolence kept pace with each other. They placed ſpies over the Royal Perſon, and attempted to baniſh from the preſence all the old and faithful ſervants of the court. They wiſhed to tear from his reſidence all the decent ornaments of Royalty; and when God ſhould pleaſe to reſtore him, he ſhould find himſelf friendleſs and unattended—diſhonoured and dethroned.—Thus "* the ſufferings of the monarch were intended as a delicious repaſt," not for the palate of the Paris Republic,† "compoſed of carpenters and taylors;" not for the National Aſſembly, conſiſting of "‡ country attornies, country ſquires who neither read nor write, quacks, curates, and ſtock-jobbers" but for the voracious appetite of the *buff and blue*. Perſons of this or of any other deſcription, who adopt the ſentiments, which Mr. Burke has now publicly avowed, would indeed, like the taylors, clip and crib the laſt remnant of the rights of the people.

The want of feeling in Mr. Burke for real, and the ſuperabundance of it for fictitious diſtreſs, calls to my remembrance a ſtory, which an antient writer has recorded.—Alexander of Pharie, a Prince notorious for his ſanguinary temper, happened to be preſent in the theatre, when one of Euripides's tragedies was exhibited.—He burſt

* Burke, page 107. † Ibid 72. ‡ Ibid 61.

into

into tears and immediately retired. When ſome one who ventured to make free with him, aſked him the next day, why he had quitted the theatre; he anſwered, "becauſe I was aſhamed to let the people ſee a man, who had never wept for their real ſufferings, weep for imaginary diſtreſs."

The obloquy and defamation which Mr. Burke deals out ſo liberally againſt the National Aſſembly is of ſo prepoſterous a nature, that it defeats his purpoſe, and immediately returns to the impure ſource from whence it flows. When he tells you that the National Aſſembly is for the moſt part compoſed of the particular deſcriptions of men above recited, what degree of credit can be given to his information, or what reſpect can be paid to his candour? He ſhould have recollected how much he reprobated, during the American War, the prevalent, though impolitic, faſhion of holding Congreſs in contempt and deriſion. Does he not remember his own words on that occaſion?—fearing that they might have eſcaped his recollection, I will take the liberty to quote them. He ſaid, "that he did not know the method of drawing up an indictment againſt a whole people. That he could not inſult and ridicule the feelings of five millions of his fellow creatures (the Americans) as Sir Edward Coke inſulted one excellent individual, Sir Walter Rawleigh at the bar. I am not ripe, ſaid Mr. Burke, to paſs

ſentence

ſentence on the graveſt public bodies, entruſted with magiſtracies of great authority and dignity, and charged with the ſafety of their fellow creatures, on the ſame title as I am myſelf: that he really thought for a wiſe man, this was not judicious; for a ſober man, not decent; for a mind tinctured with humanity, not mild or merciful." For conſiſtency's ſake, he ſhould have abſtained from uſing towards the National Aſſembly illiberality ſimilar to that, which he then ſo ſtrongly diſapproved. Congreſs held themſelves far ſuperior to the mean and impotent attacks of pride and arrogance. They ſteadily purſued their great object—They happily accompliſhed it—They eſtabliſhed their real conſequence by their virtue and their wiſdom—They opened an aſylum for the oppreſſed of all nations—They led the way to the temple of liberty, and the National Aſſembly are treading in their footſteps.—Is it not to be ſuppoſed that a people who had groaned under oppreſſion for ages, at the moment when freedom burſt in upon them, when they recovered their long loſt rights, and were inſtantly called on to uſe them, in the firſt exerciſe of the glorious privilege of election, would have been pure, virtuous and uninfluenced: that they would have choſen the men, whoſe enlightened wiſdom, whoſe public virtue, and whoſe private integrity pointed them out, as moſt worthy of this ſacred truſt, and moſt able to execute and fulfil it? There

was not time for corruption, intrigue, and undue influence, to debaſe the principles, to pervert the judgment, and to ſuppreſs the ſpirit of the people—All was done on the impulſe of the moment, and that impulſe muſt have been virtuous.—It is probable, that their choice was not particularly directed to the higheſt orders: becauſe they were principally concerned in forging chains for the people.——In France, before this diſtinguiſhed period, the nobility were all, and the people nothing. Not in France, nor even in Great Britain or Ireland ſhould we look up for public virtue among the higher ranks. It is true, there are ſome great exceptions, but in general, the public ſpirit of the country reſides among the middle claſs of men.

When Mr. Burke denies that the National Aſſembly have done any thing uſeful, liberal, wiſe or virtuous, I am apt to conclude, that I am peruſing ſome ingenious fictions, inſtead of the diſquiſitions of reaſon, or the inveſtigation of facts. Much has been done, and much certainly remains to be done.—It could not be the work of a day to reform the monſtrous abuſes of ages:—Abuſes, by the progreſſive influence of which every object of good government was perverted, every department of the ſtate was become corrupt. How numerous the evils for which the National Aſſembly were to provide a remedy! How complicated the difficulties

ficulties with which they were to contend!—A government which bent beneath an enormous preſſure of debt—A debt, chiefly incurred as the wages of iniquity; as the reward of the moſt abandoned profligacy—Crimes of the moſt flagrant nature recompenſed by the public treaſure—A vaſt army maintained, to awe the people into the baſeſt and moſt abject ſubmiſſion—A church corrupt—oppreſſive, intriguing, and debauched—poſſeſſing an enormous revenue, wrung from the hands of peaſants and of ſlaves—poſſeſſing the ear of the King—neglecting the miniſtry of their God, for the miniſtry of vice—deep in all the cabals, the intrigues, and the factions of government—preaching up the divine *rights of Kings*, and enforcing the *paſſive obedience of ſubjects*—inſiſting that the people were made for the King, and not the *King by the people*—inculcating intolerance, and practiſing licentiouſneſs—A nobility debauched, extravagant, diſſipated, haughty and imperious among their Vaſſals—ſervile and adulatory at Court.—Their fortunes—their fame—their liberty dependent on the capricious ſmiles of the monarch—The finances and the revenue of the country, involved, complicated, partial, oppreſſive, and abuſed—The ſtream of juſtice polluted and diverted into whatever channel courtly intereſt ſhould preſcribe—No regard to human or divine laws—men, goods, and properties ſwept away as the breath of the Sove-

reign directed the torrent.—Theſe were the objects which preſented themſelves, and in this ſituation did the National Aſſembly find the kingdom.—Is it wonderful then, that in clearing this Augean ſtable, in reforming the rankeſt abuſe that ever diſgraced a country, in adjuſting the moſt complicated affairs of a great empire, in laying the foundation of its future ſafety and glory, ſo much time has been ſpent, or that the work is not yet completed? When we conſider the difficulties they had to encounter, the prejudices and the particular intereſts they had to combat with, we ſhould be inclined more to wonder at the celerity of their progreſs, than to find fault with the tardineſs of their proceedings.

Mr. Burke thinks that they ought to have built upon their antient conſtitution—he ought to have informed us, when and where it was to be found. They had no ſuch thing. This, at leaſt, is the opinion of Henault, one of the beſt hiſtorians and ableſt lawyers of the French nation. Under the year 1614, where he ſpeaks of the laſt Aſſembly of the States, previous to the preſent glorious one, the following are his words: "on which occaſion I muſt obſerve, that in France we acknowledge no other ſovereign but the King; it is his authority that conſtitutes the law: whatever the *King wills*, the *Law wills*; therefore the ſtates of the kingdom have only the privilege of remonſtrating,

monſtrating, or of making humble ſupplications; and the King complies with their addreſſes or petitions, according to the rules of his royal juſtice and prudence. For were he obliged to grant all their demands, ſays one of our moſt celebrated authors, he would ceaſe to be our Sovereign, and hence it is, that during the ſitting of the States, the authority of the Parliaments, which indeed is no other than that of the King, receives no diminution, as may be eaſily proved by the proceedings of the laſt Aſſembly of the States."—Again, in the reign of Henry the VIth, the middle of the 15th century, when our conſtitution was certainly in a ſtate of great imperfection, our excellent and moſt learned lawyer Forteſcue, whom Henry made Lord Chancellor of England, expreſsly wrote that the French enjoyed much leſs liberty than the Engliſh—in fact they had no conſtitution of their own; on which to model. At no period did France enjoy any rational ſemblance of freedom.—When the preſent dominions of France were divided into many ſovereignties and principalities, their various governments were perfectly feudal. When at length, they became united under one ſovereign, by various cauſes, and particularly by the ſpirit of *chivalry*, "*the glory of the world*," the feudal ſyſtem was not weakened but ſtrengthened —the Sovereign became the Lord Paramount of all the different Seignories, and the ſmall privileges, which the different independent ſtates heretofore had

had enjoyed, had gradually ſunk, and were abſorbed by the monarchy. The National Aſſembly certainly have had our conſtitution before them. They have wiſely adopted the trial by jury in criminal caſes; and it may be expected that they will adopt the ſame mode of trial in *civil* caſes, and moſt that is excellent in our conſtitution, without its defects and corruptions. They have not choſen to patch up their ruinous houſe, but have taken it down wholly, and laying anew the foundation, in *the rights of men*, have erected on it a ſuperſtructure that will be the admiration of the world. The Engliſh conſtitution was the admiration of all nations, at the time when no other nation had any thing that deſerved the name of a conſtitution. But there is ſome kind of probability that a ſyſtem formed regularly by 1200 ſenſible men at an enlightened period of the world, will be ſuperior to a ſyſtem formed in dark ages, partially patched up as occaſion offered; irregular in its original conſtruction, and become degenerate by time.

Mr. Burke, I believe, has been deceived by the French refugees in England. The refugees in other countries and times have been worthy and conſcientious perſons, who fled from civil or religious tyranny, but the refugees of France are *defaulters eſcaped from puniſhment*; they conſiſt of ſtateſmen who were unfaithful to their truſt—penſioners who plundered

plundered the people—titled proſtitutes, and monſters of every deſcription—all that diſgraced France, and rendered it a country odious to the wiſe and virtuous of every nation in Europe—add a few good, but weak or timid men, and you have the liſt complete—theſe offſcourings of the nation have perverted the opinions of many in England, and poiſoned all the newſpapers. France till lately was not known in England, becauſe travellers judged of the whole country by the vicious manners of Paris—becauſe Engliſhmen ſeldom ſaw any thing but the theatres and the girls of the palais royal. All great cities are inhoſpitable; Paris moſt of all, being ſo great a place of reſort. The French, before the Revolution, were a great people ſpoiled: poſſeſſors of the ſame fleſh and blood as Engliſhmen, there was no reaſon why naturally they ſhould be better or worſe than their neighbours—but they were ruined by their government: how could they be wiſe, when they durſt not open their mouths, but on trifles? Where could be honour or confidence, when the Baſtile exiſted, and your boſom friend might be a ſpy of the Police? How could you expect morals in a country where abilities and worth did nothing? Where intereſt and favouritiſm carried all; and the only road to honours and greatneſs was to flatter, and partake in the vices of a great man or his miſtreſs? Juſtly do the French call the Revolution a *Regeneration of the Empire*—in a word I cannot help thinking

thinking that France is, at this moment, the greateſt ſchool of moral and political wiſdom ever opened in the world.

Too much praiſe cannot be given to Mr. Burke, for the perſuaſive, eloquent, and convincing manner in which he has ſhewn the neceſſity and the good effects of a pure religion in every condition of the human mind, among all ranks and ſtations in ſociety: happy for himſelf had he ſtopped there, and not drawn this inadmiſſible, this extraordinary concluſion, that * "the church eſtabliſhment is the *foundation of the whole* conſtitution of England" —and "that church and ſtate are inſeparable ideas." It is true that they have always been inſeparable ideas with thoſe who maintain the *divine and indefeaſible hereditary right of kings*, but ſeldom I believe among any other claſs of men, have ſuch abſurd and dangerous doctrines received countenance—certain it is that the church has always had great influence in the National councils, that it has had its own repreſentation, and that at this day it has a conſiderable ſhare in the united repreſentation of the kingdom. It would have been contrary to the ſpirit of the conſtitution, though perhaps not of the Goſpel, to have excluded them from this ſhare—more particularly as they poſſeſs ſo great a portion of the property of the kingdom—

* Burke, page 148.

property

property being the very prototype of repreſentation. To ſay that the church is the foundation of the conſtitution is juſt as impious, as to inſiſt that religion is of human fabrication, and that the Holy Scriptures are pious frauds. Our church in the darker ages poſſeſſed almoſt all the learning of the country, profeſſing and inculcating the Roman Catholic religion (a religion of all others the moſt favourable to temporal authority and temporal influence) it was equally ſedulous to eſtabliſh power, as to acquire property. Its clergy having the conſciences of Kings in their keeping, flattered their pride and their vanity, with notions of *divine right* and *paſſive ſubmiſſion*; but when they were thus amuſing them with the rattles and toys of royalty, they had their eyes ſteadily fixed on ſubſtantial advantages for themſelves—by degrees they ſlid into great privileges, immunities, and poſſeſſions—they took an active part in all the contentions of the ſtate—amidſt the wreck of fortune and the ſtruggles of parties, they not only guarded, but extended their property and power—originally but a dot in the conſtitution, they at length became a formidable engine in the hands of monarchs, and whenever put in motion, ſo violent in their operations that they almoſt ſhook to pieces the frame of the conſtitution, and endangered the liberties of the people. At and ſince the reformation, though the clergy loſt ſome of their poſſeſſions, they ſtill retained their power and

their influence—in the various diſorders ſince that period, with which the ſtate has been afflicted, they have not tamely looked on.—It is true that in proportion as the world has become enlightened, in proportion as bigotry and Intolerance have ceaſed to operate on the public mind, in proportion as the mild and genuine ſpirit of religion has infuſed its cordial drops among our ſpecies, in proportion as liberty, and philoſophy, her beſt friend and ſiſter, have diffuſed their benign and enlarging power over the globe, the political influence of the clergy has become leſs perceptible and leſs dangerous—but, to ſay that, becauſe the church has had and continues to have a ſhare in the government, it is the foundation of the whole conſtitution of England, is not ſupported by hiſtorical fact, and is repugnant to the general ſenſe of the nation.

To me, who preſume not to poſſeſs more than a moderate degree of common ſenſe, it appears ſomewhat extraordinary to hear Mr. Burke, the great advocate for the Church of England, expreſs ſuch enthuſiaſtic veneration for the late monaſtic ſyſtem of the Gallican Church: it remains for his refined abilities to reconcile thoſe ſtrange paradoxes, thoſe glaring inconſiſtencies. Mr. Burke aſſerts that "ſo tenacious are we of the old eccleſiaſtical modes and faſhions of inſtitution, that *very little alteration* has been made in them ſince the fourteenth

or

or fifteenth century,"—has he then forgot the *alterations* which our church underwent in the reign of Henry the VIIIth, and even ſince that period, or does he think them of ſuch immaterial conſequence as not to deſerve the name of *reformation?* His memory muſt certainly have failed him on this occaſion, as we cannot ſuppoſe, that his boaſted prejudices in favour of old inſtitutions could have betrayed him into ſuch unwarranted aſſertions.

It is poſſible that in endeavouring to confute theſe apothegms of Mr. Burke, I may be ſlandered as an enemy to all religion and it's eſtabliſhments.—I confeſs, I wiſhed to have abſtained from the inveſtigation of ſo delicate a ſubject: but on reflection, I aſſured myſelf that ſuch doctrines were likely to do more injury to ſociety, if permitted to paſs uncontroverted, than any intruſion of mine in endeavouring to deduce, from hiſtorical facts, the real pretenſions of the clergy. There is no man who more truly venerates the ſacred pile of religion than myſelf, or would touch it with more ſenſibility; but I look on it as neither founded on, nor founding the baſe of temporal government. It is built on a more exalted foundation, which lapſe of time cannot injure. It is not the work of mens' hands, but of Omnipotence. It is a great ſtructure, open to all mankind, affording ſhelter and relief to the calamities of human

nature. From it an Almighty Being inſpects the thoughts and actions of men, it holds out all the hopes and comforts of ſalvation—and is deſigned to ſuperintend the conduct of every individual in the univerſe. It is not peculiarly attached to any government. I know that the miniſters of that ſacred order are but men; it is not to be ſuppoſed, that they ought to be excluded from their ſhare of authority in the ſtate; nor is it to be wiſhed, that they ſhould be reſtrained from a moderate indulgence in worldly enjoyments. I wiſh to ſee them reſpected, affluent, and independent; but, I muſt be candid, and ſay, that I feel no pleaſure in ſeeing their lawn ſleeves at court nor their mitres in parliament. Viewing them in this ſituation, I am apt to conclude that they are more occupied in temporal than in ſpiritual concerns; and by mixing in ſuch company, they may be infected by all the contagious diſtempers of ambition, corruption, flattery, intrigue and diſſimulation, to which ſuch places are too often expoſed. When I ſee a biſhop reſident at his dioceſe, inculcating by example the principles of religion, diſpenſing his charity among the poor, diffuſing his hoſpitality to all ranks, promoting the meritorious among his clergy, attending to the decency and good order of the churches within his dioceſe, preſuming not to influence his clergy, but by the purity of his morality, and by the ſanctity of his deportment; in this ſituation, I venerate the mitre and lawn ſleeves,

and

and I ſhould be inclined to pay them more reſpect than to any Peer in the land. Let every man have his place in the community, but let not the miniſters of peace be ſeated in the houſe of contention.

It has long been the policy of England to connect religion with the ſtate, inſomuch as to make it the teſt for all magiſtrates, from the king to the conſtable, and for every one in whom public confidence is placed; to favour the miniſters of that church, which is called the Eſtabliſhed Church, and merely to tolerate other religions. Thus far indeed church and ſtate are connected; but to ſay that the conſtitution is founded on the church, is a ſoleciſm in politics that cannot be ſupported. I am one of thoſe, who are of opinion, that religion and politics ſhould be kept as much apart as poſſible; who think the great object of every religion is the ſame—the worſhip of the deity, and the hope of ſalvation. It is true, the ceremonies, the forms, and opinions of different ſects diſagree very much: ſome are more reaſonable and more ſimple than others; however, it muſt appear to an unprejudiced mind, that, "It is only varying the means to obtain the end,"—and we muſt conclude, that when the church takes a leading part in the various contentions of politics, it is a perverſion of chriſtianity, and an abuſe of the true principles of religion, which recommend peace and good-

will

will towards men.—I can never bring myſelf to think, that becauſe a man differs from me in religious opinions, he is leſs to be confided in as a ſubject, or relied on as a friend. In one of * Mr. Burke's eloquent ſpeeches to the electors of Briſtol, he contends againſt the right of conſtituents teſting their repreſentatives, and ſays, were that to be complied with, he muſt yield up his conſcience and his right of private judgment: A gift from Omnipotence, to which alone he is accountable. As the advocate of church and ſtate, let us examine how the above doctrines accord. The teſt to the candidate, is confined to temporal matters.—The teſt at taking an office under the Crown, applies merely to ſpiritual; to certain articles of faith and ceremonies of the church. Suppoſe the man to whom the teſt of office is applied, neither believes in the one, nor approves of the other; he is an excellent ſubject, and wiſhes to take his ſhare in the public ſervice; if he does, he not only ſurrenders his conſcience, but muſt play the hypocrite with his God. To whom then is the teſt more grievous? To the man who is only obliged on particular occaſions, to concede his private opinion on political ſubjects to his conſtituents, (who may better judge than himſelf and are ſurely more intereſted;) or the man who in accepting a place under government,

* Burke's, Political Tracts.

is

is obliged to deny the opinions of his life and the hopes of his ſalvation, to whom a teſt is preſcribed on ſpeculative queſtions, in which the individual is only concerned, and the public not really intereſted,—this is one of the evils attendant on church and ſtate. The Americans wiſely foreſaw it, and in no article did Congreſs touch upon religion, except in one general declaration, granting univerſal freedom to all denominations of chriſtians. Thus have they not excluded themſelves from the ſervices of any man of merit, wherever to be found. Thus have they intereſted every ſubject in the government of their ſtates, and for ever extinguiſhed the flame of religious contention.

Much as Mr. Burke inveighs againſt the atheiſtical opinions prevalent in France, which, if they do exiſt, muſt in a great meaſure be attributed to the neglect and bad example of the clergy; yet, the National Aſſembly have made ſome atonement for the imputed crimes of the people, in their great act of toleration and admiſſion of all religious ſects into an equal participation of office, whether civil, military or legiſlative. This will operate more to reclaim the morals of the people, to promote chriſtianity, and to procure reſpect for all religious eſtabliſhments, than all the denunciations of vengeance, which, for many centuries before, had been bellowed from the pulpit of intolerant

tolerant bigotry. This will give reſpect and ſtability to their government—introduce wealth, and extend the commerce of their country. What a glorious ſight to behold every man ſitting under his own vine, enjoying without fear, or without controul, the fecundity of nature and the fruits of his induſtry—acknowledging the beneficence of the Creator, in the manner beſt ſuited to his own ideas of adoration:—Not ſubject to the ruffian intruſion of ignorance and intolerance, under the bloody banners of perſecution, endeavouring to enchain the conſcience, and impriſon the mind:—Not expoſed to the inſtantaneous violence of mercileſs engines of deſpotiſm, tearing the unhappy victims from all that is dear in life, caſting them into the abyſs of miſery, and into the dungeon of ſlavery. Whatever errors the National Aſſembly may have committed in the conduct of buſineſs, though we have reaſon to believe, that Mr. Burke has been more ingenious than accurate in diſcovering them, and more ſevere than candid in repreſenting them, this great act of ſubſtantial juſtice and unequivocal freedom, makes ſuperlative recompence.

It is impoſſible not to ſuppoſe, that there were ſome highly deſerving characters among the French clergy, and it is equally impoſſible not to feel for the diminution of their incomes; but, when we conſider them as a body, who by undue means had

had acquired exorbitant power, and had accumulated enormous wealth—many of whom were drones in the ſtate, and others, vultures preying on the vitals of the people:—When we conſider, that the lower clergy were poor, even to beggary, that the higher were rich beyond meaſure; that inſtead of diffuſing their wealth in charity, they ſpent it in all the voluptuous vices of the court and of the capital:—When we conſider that many of the dignitaries of the church were boys, the decayed branches of the nobility:—When we reflect, that religion was neglected and lowered in eſtimation, by the non-attendance and non-reſidence of the dignified clergy;—that the finances of the country were almoſt exhauſted—that a moſt favourable opportunity for a reform then offered, which if not ſeized, may poſſibly never recur:—that ſome of the clergy of the preſent day, could only be ſufferers—that many of them would be gainers;—that the clerical life in France enjoining celibacy, renders their wants the fewer and their neceſſities leſs urgent, than if they had families to maintain, and children to provide for:—Taking into our view all theſe conſiderations, we are apt to conclude, that the act of the National Aſſembly, in poſſeſſing themſelves of the church property, applying it to liquidate the public debt, and guarantying a more equal income to the clergy, was an act of great policy, favourable to the cauſe of religion, and not of that injuſtice which Mr.

Burke paints it to be. He has introduced *our* clergy—for my part I ſee no analogy between the churches of France and of England. I truſt the ſame vices do not prevail, the ſame exorbitant wealth and power do not exiſt, the ſame neglect of duty does not appear, and, thank heaven! the ſame exigencies of ſtate demand not ſuch a ſacrifice.

To ſay that the aſſignats will not paſs, appears to be a prediction very unlikely to be fulfilled. In my opinion, they are the beſt government ſecurity ever held out to the public; they have the ſuperiority over all other ſimilar ſecurities, which a mortgage of land has over a promiſſory note—they alſo engage the purchaſers in a firm and intereſted adherence to the new conſtitution. Much may be menaced, that the different powers of Europe will take a decided part in favour of the ariſtocrats, and make an effort to reſtore the old government in France. While the public mind continues as it does, 24 in 25 in favour of the new conſtitution, France may ſmile at the menace. The powers of Europe have had too much work upon their hands of late, and they are grown too wiſe to hazard ſuch an officious interference; the firſt hoſtile movement of that kind, would probably cauſe a continental war. As to Great-Britain, ſhe is neither inclined, nor would ſhe ſtoop to intrude on ſuch a diſhonourable occaſion.—It is

true,

true, it may be ſaid by ſome, that if ſhe did, it would be only retaliation: but be it remembered, that when France interfered as to America, it was to eſtabliſh, not to ſuppreſs freedom. In that fortunate criſis, Ireland regained her conſtitution. The ſeeds of French liberty were ſown in the foreſts of America—removed from thence, it has ſprung up a mighty oak, which I truſt, will ſhade and ſhelter generations yet unborn.

It is then with pride and exultation, I contemplate *the propitiouſneſs of the times*, and rejoice in a coincidence of opinion with one of the greateſt patriots, and moſt enlightened philoſophers of the age. I glory with him at ſeeing liberty, the beſt and firſt gift of God to man, extended to 24 millions of my ſpecies; and I cheriſh the animating hope, that it will irradiate every part of the habitable globe, which has not, as yet, felt its invigorating influence. Peace, philanthropy, ſcience, arts, commerce and induſtry, muſt follow in her train. In the liberty of other countries, we muſt ſee new ſecurity for our own.—Much as I venerate the Britiſh conſtitution, I cannot be ſo blind as not to diſcover its defects; nor ſo torpid, as not to wiſh them to be remedied. We may be told, that it anſwers the purpoſe of the preſent moment; yet, who can diveſt himſelf of anxious feelings for futurity? We muſt look up with trembling fear, at the ſtupendous maſs

of debt which hangs over the empire. When we conſider it as the work but of one century, how ought we to dread the accumulation of another, continuing in equal progreſſion!—it would be heaping Pelion on Oſſa—it would be the monument of our vices, and the tomb of our liberties.—Under ſuch awful impreſſions, can there be any thing more natural than to enquire into the cauſe of this mighty preſſure, and endeavour to lighten the load, which, even now, requires Atlantean ſhoulders to ſuſtain.—It can be traced to the perverſion and decay of the repreſentation.—This tremendous heap of national debt, is the depoſit of the foul torrent of venality and corruption, which has almoſt deluged the land, and levelled the great barriers of freedom.—Until you clear the ſource from whence it iſſues, every day will add to the deſtructive maſs. It becomes the duty of every man, in proportion to his abilities and ſtation, to aſſiſt in the great work of reform. A few ſtateſmen are inadequate to its completion. They may draw good plans, but it muſt be the joint effort of the people which alone can ſecure the execution.

Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox have diſtinguiſhed themſelves in forming great outlines; had they paid their artificers, as they do for the ordinary jobs of the ſtate, much progreſs would have been made in the work—in Ireland it was attempted, but

but unfortunately did not ſucceed. A reveted band of patriots, the delegates of the nation, met, and formed a plan, but thoſe who were chiefly inſtrumental in ſetting fire to the fabric, were only intereſted in the plunder; they conſequently decried it. Government was in force, their mercenaries were arrayed, each chieftain put himſelf at the head of his vaſſals—the whole entrenched themſelves in privilege, and taking advantage of that unaſſailable poſt, they levelled their cowardly defamation againſt the ſaviours of their country. The people remained in liſtleſs apathy—the patriot ſoldiers, a choſen few, reſted a while on their arms, but diſappointed of the auxiliaries they had a right to expect, and unwilling to throw the country into confuſion by hazarding an engagement when ſucceſs was improbable, they prudently retired; ſatisfied, they had done their duty. Though diſappointed, they were not vanquiſhed; though repulſed, not diſhonoured. Perſeverance in this juſt cauſe muſt at length prevail. In both countries we ſhould look to propitious times. Our eyes ſhould ſteadily be fixed on this great object, which can alone give hope for the immortality of the conſtitution. Regardleſs of the gibes, deſpiſing the ridicule, and diſdaining the menace of thoſe, who preſume to monopolize the good ſenſe and political wiſdom of both countries, who arrogate to themſelves the excluſive privilege of modelling the ſtate,

and

and vainly endeavour to ſuppreſs every voice raiſed in favour of the *rights of men*, let us firmly purſue the tenour of our way, confident of being accompanied by the real friends of the conſtitution, whoſe expiring wiſh muſt be "*eſto perpetua*:"—and we may retort on Mr. Burke his own words, and tell him that "all he ſaid, and all he "argued, only amounted to theſe circumſtances, "that the gentleman had abilities, had wit, but "had not a caſe or argument, a principle to ſup-"port, or a ſupport to one of his principles, "which, he would then declare to be, whether "they were conſidered politically or parliament-"arily, as different from his *own*, and as far "aſunder as the poles of the fixed ſtars."

FINIS.

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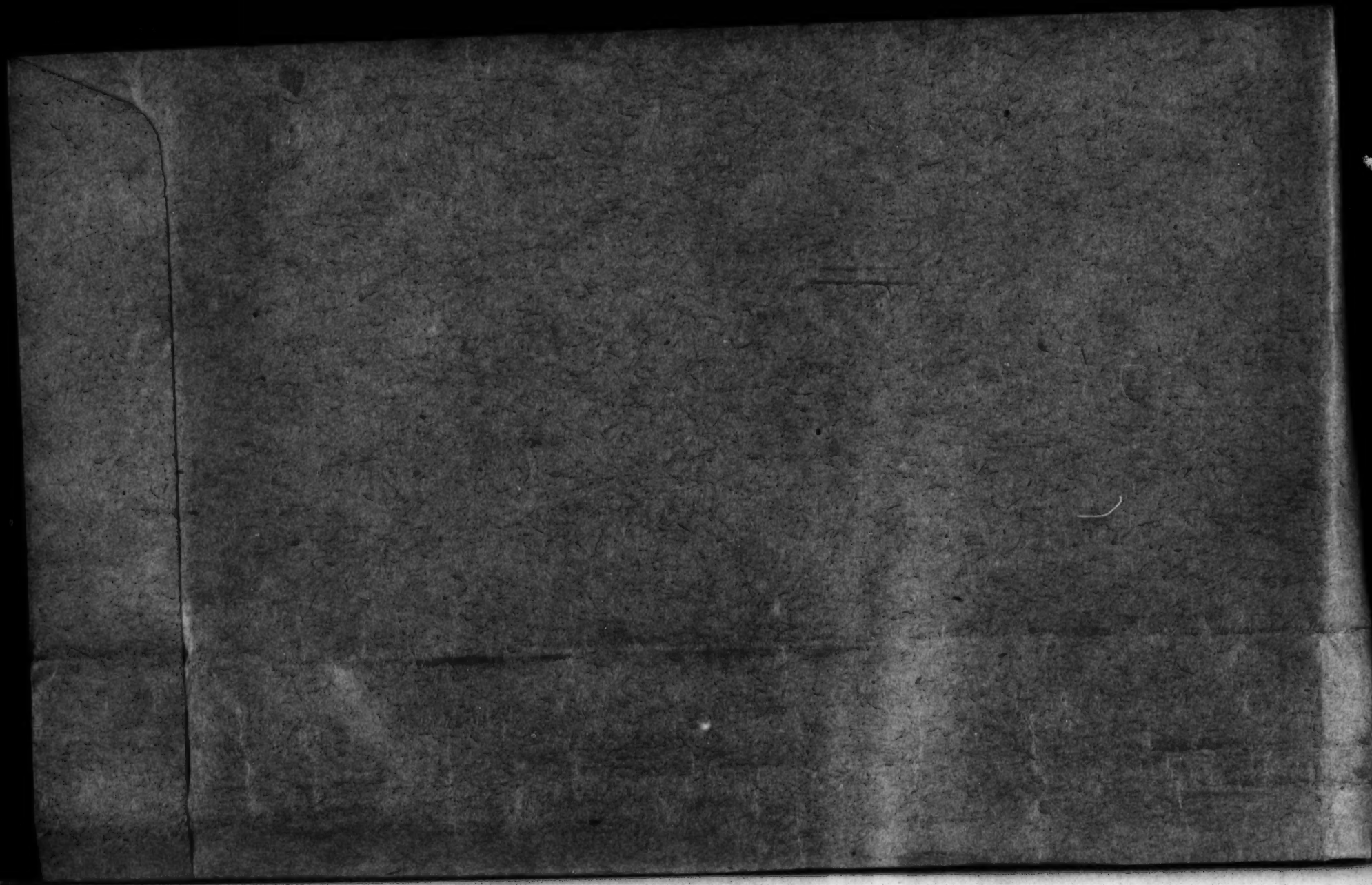
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